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THE STAR-LEDGER

# DEP takes aim at contaminated South P

By Tom Avril

STAR-LEDGER STAFF

State environmental officials have known for 10 years about contamination at a 25-acre site on Hamilton Boulevard in South Plainfield, and they took steps to protect local drinking water.

But now, because of new, more comprehensive data from the federal Environmental Protection Agency, the state has requested that the site be targeted for Superfund cleanup.

That was no surprise to Tom Marvel, who owns one of the 15 tenant businesses on the land near Spicer Avenue.

"We saw them in the white suits

last summer," said Marvel, who owns a company that does custom woodwork. "Just looking around, you know this place is nasty. It's not a big shock."

EPA investigators have been taking samples for more than a year, and have found that employees of the 15 tenant businesses are at risk of exposure to lead, cadmium and polychlorinated biphenyls, commonly known as PCBs.

There is also a risk of exposure for those who trespass on the partly unfenced property, which was used by Cornell-Dubilier Electronics Inc. between 1936 and 1962, the agency reported.

New Jersey officials have re-

quested that the EPA designate the site for Superfund cleanup after finding at some locations on the site that the level of PCBs are thousands of times higher than the EPA generally considers to be safe and lead levels are in some cases more than a hundred times the safe level.

Yet there is no immediate cause for alarm, as conditions are dangerous only for those exposed over a long period, said EPA project manager Eric Wilson.

Some 540 people live within a quarter mile of the site, including nearby residents on Hamilton Boulevard and Spicer Avenue. There is no evidence that the residential area has been contaminated, said Wilson, who

went door-to-door Tuesday to answer residents' questions.

Edison environmentalist Robert Spiegel warned that there could be problems at New Market pond, a popular local fishing spot. The pond is fed by a branch of the Bound Brook that meanders through the Cornell-Dubilier site.

Wilson said there is some contamination in the sediment near the site, but that testing at the pond has not been done.

"The thing we're dealing with now is the short term," said EPA spokesman Rich Cahill. "It's more of a chronic hazard. It's not an acute problem."

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